



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

Members of the Board

Gloria Molina
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Pastor Herrera, Jr.
Director

June 1, 2005

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012-3265

Dear Supervisors:

FY 2005-06 UNMET CRITICAL NEEDS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

The Department of Consumer Affairs has identified a total of \$529,000 in administrative and program staffing support positions, needed technology improvements, and special operational needs of the department as the highest priorities for consideration by the Board during FY 2005-06 Budget Deliberations. These needs are not addressed in the Chief Administrative Officer's recommended budget for the Department of Consumer Affairs. It also requests consideration for additional funding for our Small Claims Court Advisor program.

1. **Funding for an Administrative Assistant III**
Amount: \$104,000
Positions: 1.0
Funding Source: Ongoing Net County Cost

Administrative Services personnel play a vital role in the overall administration and management of the Department. Expanded services and new community partnerships have created a critical need for additional resources in this area. Administrative personnel ensure compliance with Board mandated ordinances, process and post invoices and revenues, and develop and monitor grant budgets and fiscal expenditures. The Administrative Assistant III will provide necessary and required administrative, budgetary, and financial support to the Administrative Services Division. Some examples of the duties and responsibilities will include: responding to CAO (numerous surveys and reports), CIO (implementation of the Business Automation Plan), and Auditor-Controller directives (i.e. ICCP), preparing fiscal documents for grant program and fiscal audits, preparing and analyzing data for management review, updating and implementing the Department's Emergency Plan, Business Continuity Plan, and developing management tools such as fiscal and statistical databases, spreadsheets, systems, and procedures. This is in line with the County's Strategic Goal of Fiscal responsibility.

2. Funding for Consumer Affairs Representative III

Amount: \$179,000
Positions: 2.0
Funding Source: Ongoing Net County Cost

The CAR III will conduct “special investigations” which are one of the most effective ways to deter consumer fraud and protect the residents of Los Angeles County. These uniquely qualified, trained, and experienced investigators will conduct highly complex consumer fraud investigations initiated by complaints against unscrupulous and deceptive companies that target vulnerable County residents. Examples of unscrupulous and deceptive companies and business practices include: credit “repair” services, high school and college diploma mills, moving companies, car dealerships, collection agencies, and internet scams. Investigations of these types of “businesses” can lead to civil and criminal prosecutions that seek to punish offenders, deter similar crimes, return money to victims, and educate a vast number of consumers by the media attention they garner.

3. Computer system upgrade and data/system security

Amount: \$161,000
Funding Source: One time funding

The Department’s current computer hardware and software are inadequate to allow the Department to effectively and efficiently serve Los Angeles County residents and maintain system and data security. These funds will be used to enhance system security and replace the Department’s rapidly deteriorating computer systems, which are constantly in the state of repair and are essential to maintain business operations. These systems include obsolete computers, servers and software. This is in line with the CIO’s Strategic Goal 1) “Utilizing electronic business technologies to reduce costs and improve services” and the CIO’s Strategic Goal 2) “Fostering departmental participation in countywide initiatives and teams to manage and mitigate information security threats”.

4. Relocation to new East Los Angeles Civic Center

Amount: \$25,000
Funding Source: One time funding

The new East Los Angeles Civic Center will centralize many county services and will allow residents to access these services closer to their homes, decreasing traffic congestion and increasing ease of service access. It offers a great example of government’s responsiveness to the needs of the community. These funds will be used for relocating the Department’s East Los Angeles Branch Office to the new East Los Angeles Civic Center. This relocation will enable the Department to better serve residents in the community.

5. Performance Counts! Consultant

Amount: \$60,000
Funding Source: Net County Cost

Meaningful performance measurement instruments allow an agency to accurately capture, analyze, evaluate, and report its strengths and challenges, and provide a roadmap for future goal setting and achievement. These funds will be used to hire a consultant to evaluate and make recommendations on the Department's Performance Counts! measures, staff development and alignment of the Department's Strategic Plan with the County's Strategic Goals and Objectives. Due to the Department's limited staffing resources, it lacks trained subject matter experts who specialize in this area. The Department is committed to building an infrastructure to support ongoing performance measures that will focus the Department on performance-based management.

6. Supplemental Program Need: Small Claims Court Advisor Service

Amount: \$280,000
Funding Source: Small Claims Advisor Program Fund

Even though this is not listed as a "critical" need in our previous discussion with the Chief Administrative Office, the funding for our Small Claims Court Advisor program continues to be a program service need. With the expansion of the Self Help Legal Access Centers (SHLAC) throughout LA County, Court Administrators have continued to request that our Department provide SCC advisors to assist their litigants at many Courthouse locations. Additional funding for the SCC Advisor program would require a Policy Decision by the Board.

During FY 2005-06 budget deliberations, your Board is requested to give favorable consideration to these items that will strengthen our mission, enhance consumer protection services for LA County residents, and advance the Board-adopted County Strategic Plan.

Sincerely,

PASTOR HERRERA, JR.
Director

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c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer
Violet Varona-Lukens, Executive Officer